

HUNTERS

Because they want to kill you,
for being there,
it is all right to hunt these men (who are
sixteen - or sometimes thirteen - and look it
till they're thirty, those who
live through the hunt; beardless, unlike the village elders
who attain great age and goatees
by being wily and silent, and running with both sides).

Fair game, then; but even better hunters,
striking from spider holes, paddy-dikes
(they know all the cover, fighting near their homes;
we're the redcoats here, they're redskins),
treelines especially: approach these warily,
eyes quick, hand on the trigger, paddy-water
holding your crotch, pressing cool against thighs,
mud eating your boots, making noises.

This is a real trip - in paddies or jungle, or driving
alone, fast, butt in your lap and muzzle out the window,
or at night on the dikes, riceleaves black on a moon in the water -
being hunted, hunting.

Keeps you awake, very, very alive, super-cool:
knowing you're watched, walking into traps,
waiting to shoot your way out with new guns
that fire as long as you press the trigger
(summer twilights, the garden hose with your
thumb on the nozzle).

The only game in-country
is men. These guns would ruin a pelt - make a
tiger-skin look like a leopard's - but the good heads
have fled west, anyway (having no graves to tend),
border-crossing to Cambodia
which is ass-deep in Vietnamese rhinos and
elephants, keeping their noses clean.

Even in choppers hunters get to be stalked.
In the old colonies, it wasn't pukka to shoot
from vehicles, but the new rule is, just,
wait till you're fired on - sound of corn popping -
then wheel and hose with the .50 calibre;
sometimes (generals get to do this) swoop low
enough to reach down, pull up a quarry
(exhausted still running) by his bushy black hair,
lay his fine-boned, heaving,
bloody chest across green thighs
to carry back.

Why not? hunt men who hunt you?
Their line is: It's their country; they were there first,
we have no business, etc.
But then, the tigers could have said that. Or the Indians.